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Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 69/80, commended the Mediterranean countries for their efforts in meeting common challenges through coordinated overall responses, based on a spirit of multilateral partnership, towards the general objective of turning the Mediterranean basin into an area of dialogue, exchanges and cooperation, guaranteeing peace, stability and prosperity, encouraged them to strengthen such efforts through, inter alia, a lasting multilateral and action-oriented cooperative dialogue among States of the region, and recognized the role of the United Nations in promoting regional and international peace and security.

2. The General Assembly recognized that the elimination of the economic and social disparities in levels of development and other obstacles, as well as respect and greater understanding among cultures in the Mediterranean area, would contribute to enhancing peace, security and cooperation among Mediterranean countries through the existing forums.

3. The General Assembly called upon all States of the Mediterranean region that had not yet done so to adhere to all the multilaterally negotiated legal instruments related to the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, thus creating the conditions necessary for strengthening peace and cooperation in the region. The Assembly encouraged all States of the region to favour the conditions necessary for strengthening the confidence-building measures among them by promoting genuine openness and transparency on all military matters, by participating, inter alia, in the United Nations Report on Military Expenditures and by providing accurate data and information to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

4. The General Assembly encouraged the Mediterranean countries to strengthen further their cooperation in combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including the possible resort by terrorists to weapons of mass destruction, taking into account the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, and in combating international crime and illicit arms transfers and illicit drug production, consumption and trafficking, which pose a serious threat to peace, security and stability in the region and therefore to the improvement of the current political, economic and social situation and which jeopardize friendly relations among States, hinder the development of international cooperation and result in the destruction of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the democratic basis of pluralistic society.

5. Furthermore, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on means to strengthen security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region. The present report is submitted in compliance with that request and on the basis of information received from Member States.

6. In this connection, a note verbale dated 9 February 2015 was sent to all Member States requesting their views on the subject. The replies received at the time of reporting are contained in section II below. Additional replies will be issued as addenda to the present report.

II. Replies received from Governments

Portugal

[Original: English]
[4 May 2015]

At its sixty-ninth session, the General Assembly of the United Nations, recalling its previous resolutions adopted on that subject, reaffirmed the importance of cooperation among the Mediterranean countries as a basic way to ensure peace, security, stability and development in the region, which comprises the European countries as well as the Maghreb and the Middle East.

Portugal has been involved in the cooperation process with the Mediterranean countries in the area of defence through its active participation in projects that have been contributing to the strengthening of relations among European countries and the Middle East region. Those projects include the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the Barcelona process, which led to the Union for the Mediterranean, to which Portugal belongs, the Alliance of Civilizations, etc.

Portugal also participates in the 5+5 Defence Initiative. Its actions regarding military cooperation, security issues and civil emergency involve 10 countries from the Mediterranean region: Algeria, France, Italy, Libya, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Portugal, Spain and Tunisia.

Through the European Union, Portugal has been involved in different programmes on arms controls in the Sahel region, which provide for, inter alia, the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons.

Portugal offered in a timely manner one of its planes to ensure the safety and security of the United States vessel *Cape Ray*, on which the hydrolysis of chemicals from the Syrian Arab Republic took place, in the Mediterranean Sea.

Portugal has been involved with regional partners in several areas of disarmament in order to strengthen safety and security in the Mediterranean region.

Spain

[Original: Spanish]
[29 May 2015]

For historical and geographical reasons, the Mediterranean region has always been a priority for Spain in all respects.

The firm commitment of Spain to stronger security and cooperation in this region is clearly stated in its National Security Strategy, adopted in 2013, in which Europe and the Mediterranean are the principal strategic priorities.

Peace, stability and prosperity in the southern Mediterranean are of the utmost importance for the security of Spain and of Europe as a whole. Our strategic position in that region is undergoing a transformation as a result of change processes, whose main consequence thus far has been the democratic election of Governments that are accountable to their citizens. All transitions are complex and involve opportunities and risks. The exclusion of social groups or the use of violence to gain political advantage may create a great deal of instability, with

extremely negative consequences for the countries on the southern shore and the security of the whole region.

Together with the European Union and the international community, Spain will support the efforts of the countries of the region to bring about greater social and economic development, in addition to greater political stability. A stable, democratic and more prosperous Mediterranean is the best guarantee of security for all the countries in the region. However, political instability and the lack of economic prospects for a large part of the population of these countries have direct repercussions on the security of the Sahel and could affect Spain and Europe.

The Maghreb is of particular interest to Spain. Acting in conjunction with the other countries of the region, we must respond to challenges common to both shores, such as the promotion of the rule of law, economic development and social cohesion, the consolidation of economic models that encourage the inclusion of all citizens, the stabilization of energy supplies and the regulation and control of migratory flows and the combating of terrorism and illegal international trafficking, including drug trafficking.

Spain will support the common security of the Mediterranean, both bilaterally and also by promoting and leading frameworks for broader cooperation, such as the Union for the Mediterranean, the European Neighbourhood Policy and other forums, such as the Five plus Five Defence Initiative, the Mediterranean Dialogue of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) or the 2004 Istanbul Cooperation Initiative.

The Mediterranean continues to witness long-standing and highly complex conflicts that affect the security of everyone. Crises such as those in Libya and the Syrian Arab Republic remind us of the fragility of an area where security is subject to tension and not unrelated to the actions of extremist terrorist movements in more distant regions, which take advantage of States' instability to occupy spaces beyond the reach of Government.

In particular, Spain will continue to work within the European Union towards a final settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in accordance with the agreed parameters. Related to the question of Western Sahara, Spain, in accordance with United Nations resolutions and as a member of the Group of Friends of Western Sahara, will not falter in its active commitment to the achievement of a just, lasting and, mutually acceptable political solution. Spain will also contribute to a just and definitive solution to the problem of Cyprus and will cooperate with Turkey in its capacity as a regional actor of importance for the security and stability of the Eastern Mediterranean.

National Defence Directive 1/2012 of 31 July 2012 sets out the strategic context that defines the most significant issues from an international perspective; these include the emergence of new world powers and the strengthening of existing ones, the global financial and economic crisis, unrest in the Mediterranean, instability in the Sahel, nuclear proliferation and piracy.

For the defence policy of Spain, the Mediterranean region requires a framework for ongoing action and decision-making. That policy is governed by the following criteria:

- It complies rigorously with international law;

- It is a policy with a strong multilateral focus that was developed within the framework of various initiatives and organizations with which Spain is involved: the Mediterranean Dialogue within NATO; the Union for the Mediterranean[1] within the European Union; the activities carried out with the Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE); and the Five plus Five Defence Initiative, in which Spain, together with nine other countries from both shores of the Mediterranean, participates. In all these multilateral forums, Spain has consistently demonstrated an active and highly committed policy in terms of its relevant roles in the Mediterranean region;

- Support for all security and defence initiatives that facilitate dialogue and promote bilateral cooperation among countries in the Mediterranean region, especially through defence diplomacy.

It can be seen that this is an active policy with a high level of commitment, as shown by our presence in the Eastern Mediterranean. There are 576 Spaniards currently serving with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, whose complex mission is to work towards general stability in a specific area, with many implications for the region, the Middle East and the world.

However, it cannot be denied that the Mediterranean is a region of highly complex and diverse social, religious, economic and value systems; therefore, the greatest challenge is to find or develop strategies that foster integration and cooperation.

There are, moreover, significant differences in perceptions, including with regard to security and defence. The establishment of a system of measures to foster trust and security among the Mediterranean countries could prove crucial. A system of demonstrated effectiveness, such as that which already exists within OSCE, could be a good starting point if adapted to the Mediterranean context, with a special emphasis on non-proliferation, as the best means of countering the lack of commitment to international arms control treaties among non-State actors in countries with security problems.

The system could be based on a Mediterranean security charter in which the geographical region of the Mediterranean would be considered an integral security area. The charter would include a series of measures to foster trust and security, a code of good conduct for Mediterranean countries and a mechanism for exchanging information which would allow Mediterranean countries to better coordinate their individual security agendas.

The measures to be promoted in order to foster mutual trust, and thus to strengthen security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region, include the following:

[1] The Union for the Mediterranean is a cooperation forum that was established on 13 July 2008, at the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean, in order to promote progress in peace processes and stability in the Mediterranean region. It comprises 43 countries representing more than 750 million citizens of countries on the Mediterranean coast and countries of the European Union. Its goal is to foster cooperation on specific development projects in order to encourage regional integration.

- Increased cooperation in meeting global security challenges such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, organized crime, mass population movements and drug trafficking;
- Establishment of mechanisms for consultation and exchange of military information;
- Cooperation in establishing mechanisms for conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation;
- Promotion of the signing and ratification and upholding the objectives of international treaties and agreements on disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation;
- Promotion of the establishment of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery;
- Strengthening of cooperation and integration among Mediterranean countries and furthering of their contribution to peacekeeping operations, especially those linked to the Mediterranean region;
- Reinforcement of cooperation and assistance programmes in the area of security and defence and promotion of exchanges of military units and observers in exercises, training, visits to military units and General Staff meetings;
- Expansion and strengthening of mechanisms for the provision of armed forces support to civilian authorities in the event of an emergency or disaster;
- Continuation of the efforts of the Five plus Five Defence College (Algeria, France, Italy, Libya, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Portugal, Spain and Tunisia). The Ministerial Declaration of Cagliari of 10 December 2008 marked the official launching of the College, an online school established to address common security and defence issues in the 10 partner countries and to improve mutual awareness on the part of the countries on both shores of the Western Mediterranean, as well as to facilitate the exchange of experience and networking among the participants. The activities of the College are shared among the member countries each year on a voluntary basis;
- Strengthening of cooperation programmes on maritime security and the control of maritime traffic;
- Continuation of the international seminars on security and defence in the Mediterranean, which have been held annually in Barcelona since 2002, with a view to contributing to the political and academic debate on security and defence in the Mediterranean;
- Promotion of activities that lead to greater transparency in defence planning and in national budget control processes;
- Promotion of activities to foster democratic oversight of national defence and national security forces.

Following from implementation of the above, in 2014 Spain held the rotating presidency of the Five plus Five Defence Initiative. The most important activities undertaken included a seminar on gender mainstreaming in the armed forces, sets of meetings with the Ministers of Defence and the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the

members of the Initiative, an intermediate academic module of the Five plus Five Defence College and a maritime security exercise held in the Mediterranean Sea.

Qatar

[Original: Arabic]
[14 April 2015]

- All causes of tension in the region should be eliminated and just and lasting solutions to the persistent problems of the region should be promoted through peaceful means, thus ensuring the withdrawal of foreign forces of occupation and respecting the sovereignty of all countries of the Mediterranean region. The principles of non-interference, non-intervention, non-use of force or threat of use of force and the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force should be fully adhered to in accordance with the Charter and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. Above all, the question of Palestine is urgent and pressing, and requires a just resolution.
- The countries of the Mediterranean region should take coordinated overall measures, based on a spirit of multilateral partnership, towards the general objective of turning the Mediterranean region into an area of dialogue, exchanges and cooperation, guaranteeing peace, stability and prosperity. Such measures should include, inter alia, a lasting multilateral and action-oriented cooperative dialogue among States of the region.
- Economic and social disparities in levels of development should be eliminated, and respect and greater understanding among cultures in the area should be promoted.
- All States of the Mediterranean region that have not yet done so must adhere to all the legal instruments related to disarmament and non-proliferation, thus creating the conditions necessary for strengthening peace and cooperation in the region.
- The international community should encourage the States of the Mediterranean region to strengthen further their cooperation in combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including the possible resort by terrorists to weapons of mass destruction, taking into account the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, and in combating international crime and illicit arms transfers and illicit drug production, consumption and trafficking.
- The international community should encourage all States of the region to favour the conditions necessary for strengthening the confidence-building measures among them by promoting genuine openness and transparency on all matters related to the security of the region, which is closely connected with global security.